

August 27, 2009

On August 21, 2009, the New Teacher Center (NTC) submitted public comments to the U.S. Department of Education's (ED) *Race to the Top Notice of Proposed Priorities*. This Addendum includes specific recommendations with regard to the ED's definitions of "effective" and "highly effective" teachers and principals as well as recommended edits to the proposed Selection Criteria.

## **DEFINITIONS**

### **1. Effective Teachers:**

In NTC's recently submitted comments, we stated the following:

The proposed guidelines define "effective teacher" as "a teacher whose students achieve acceptable rates (*e.g.*, at least one grade level in an academic year) of student growth (as defined in this notice). States may supplement this definition as they see fit so long as teacher effectiveness is judged, in significant measure, by student growth (as defined in this notice)." 74 Fed. Reg. at 37811

**Recommendation:** The RttT guidelines should include a definition of teacher effectiveness that acknowledges and supports the development of teacher and principal practice, especially during the early years. New teachers and principals, who disproportionately work in struggling schools, need strong mentoring and support to become effective.

**Specifically, NTC makes the following recommendation to elaborate on this definition. Federal register text is in black font; recommendations are redlined:**

74 Fed. Reg at 37811:

*Effective teacher* means may be defined in part as a teacher whose students achieve acceptable rates (*e.g.*, at least one grade level in an academic year) of student growth (as defined in this notice). States ~~may~~ should supplement this definition with multiple measures as they see fit so long as teacher effectiveness is judged, in significant measure, by student growth (as defined in this notice). Supplemental measures should include evidence of research-based teaching practice, teacher performance, and contribution to student learning; such measures should be appropriate both for newly licensed and veteran teachers.

Sources:

- Braun, H. I. *Using student progress to evaluate teachers: A primer on value-added models* (2005), Princeton, NJ: Education Testing Service, Inc.
- Stronge, J. *Qualities of Effective Teachers* (2002), Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Wei, R. C., Darling-Hammond, L. et. al. *Professional Learning in the Learning Profession: A Status*

*Report on Teacher Development in the U.S. and Abroad – Technical Report* (2009), Dallas, TX: National Staff Development Council.

- Weisberg, D., et. al. *The Widget Effect: Our National Failure to Acknowledge and Act on Differences in Teacher Effectiveness* (2009), Brooklyn, NY: The New Teacher Project.

## 2. Effective Principals:

In NTC's recently submitted comments, we stated the following:

Student achievement data alone does not provide school leaders the information they need to produce continuous improvement within their schools. The proposed guidelines emphasize student data as the sole measure of success. For example, the definition of effective principal “means a principal whose students, overall and for each subgroup (described in section 1111(b)(2)(C)(v)(II) of the ESEA), demonstrate acceptable rates (*e.g.*, at least one grade level in an academic year) of student growth (as defined in this notice). States may supplement this definition as they see fit so long as principal effectiveness is judged, in significant measure, by student growth (as defined in this notice).” 74 *Fed.Reg. at 37811*. However, there are no strategies or requirements to show how states should identify “effective principals” when, in fact, we know from research that quality school leaders utilize student data in combination with other data to inform practice within their schools.

### Recommendation

**The RttT guidelines should define ‘effective principal’ more expansively, drawing upon additional measures of student success and data on teaching and learning conditions to fully reflect the impact of teachers, school leaders, and school environment on student learning.**

The RttT guidelines place too little emphasis on changing policy and practice related to school leadership which is one of the fundamental cornerstones for improving student success. If RttT is to contribute to successful long-term school reform, the role of quality school leadership as a component of teacher effectiveness needs to be addressed explicitly. RttT combines both teachers and leaders into one group rather than focusing on key strategies for each to be effective.

### Recommendation

**The RttT guidelines should require states to address school leadership development and teaching and learning conditions in their strategies to improve teacher effectiveness and the equitable distribution of quality teachers.**

**Specifically, NTC makes the following recommendation to elaborate on this definition of effective principals. Federal register text is in black font; recommendations are redlined:**

74 *Fed.Reg. at 37811*

*Effective principal* ~~means a~~ may be defined in part as a principal whose students, overall and for each subgroup (described in section 1111(b)(2)(C)(v)(II) of the ESEA), demonstrate acceptable rates (*e.g.*, at least one grade level in an academic year) of student growth (as defined in this notice). States ~~may~~ should supplement this definition with multiple measures as they see fit so long as principal effectiveness is judged, in significant measure, by student growth (as defined in this notice). Supplemental measures should include evidence of providing supportive teaching and learning conditions, and positive community engagement.

Sources:

- Clotfelter, C.T., Ladd, H.C., and Vigdor, J.L. *Working conditions, school characteristics and teacher mobility: Evidence from North Carolina* (under revision for journal).
- Hanushek, E. A. and Rivkin, S. G. "Pay, Working Conditions, and Teacher Quality" (Spring 2007), *The Future of Children*, Vol. 17, No. 1, pp. 69-86.
- Hirsch, E., Freitas, C., et. al. *Massachusetts Teaching, Learning and Leading Survey: Creating School Conditions Where Teachers Stay and Students Thrive* (2009), Santa Cruz, CA: New Teacher Center.
- Leithwood, K. *Teacher working conditions that matter: Evidence for change* (2006), Toronto, ON, Canada: Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario.

### 3. Highly Effective Principal

NTC offers recommended language change for the definition of a highly effective principal as follows. Federal register text is in black font; recommendations are redlined:

74 Fed.Reg. at 37811

*Highly effective principal* ~~means~~ may be defined in part as a principal whose students, overall and for each subgroup (described in section 1111(b)(2)(C)(v)(II) of the EAEA), demonstrate high rates (e.g., more than one grade level in an academic year) of student growth (as defined in this notice). States ~~may~~ should supplement this definition with multiple measures as they see fit so long as principal effectiveness is judged, in significant measure, by student growth (as defined in this notice). In addition to evidence of providing supportive teaching and learning conditions, and positive community engagement, supplemental measures should include evidence of promising or research-based strategies of attracting, developing, and retaining effective teachers.

### 4. Highly Effective Teacher

NTC offers recommended language change for the definition of a highly effective teacher as follows. Federal register text is in black font; recommendations are redlined:

74 Fed. Reg at 37811:

*Highly effective teacher* ~~means~~ may be defined in part as a teacher whose students achieve high rates (e.g., more than one grade level in an academic year) of student growth (as defined in this notice). States ~~may~~ should supplement this definition with multiple measures as they see fit so long as teacher effectiveness is judged, in significant measure, by student growth (as defined in this notice). In addition to evidence of research-based teaching practice, teacher performance, and contribution to student learning, supplemental measures should include evidence of teacher leadership (e.g., serving as a new teacher mentor or instructional leader, leading a professional learning community).

## **SELECTION CRITERIA: GREAT TEACHERS AND LEADERS**

### **1. Differentiating teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance**

In NTC's recently submitted comments, we stated the following:

Teachers need professional support and opportunities to develop their practice, including focused induction during their initial years in the profession. It is important to measure teacher impact on student learning, but measuring impact without providing the means to help educators strengthen their practice will ultimately fail our schools.

Given the focus of RttT on high-need LEAs, and given the research evidence that such LEAs (as well as the lowest-performing and highest-need schools within those LEAs) tend to employ a disproportionate share of beginning teachers and principals, we believe that the developmental needs of novice educators in their initial years in teaching or leadership should be explicitly referenced in this selection criteria.

**NTC offers recommended language change for the selection criteria related to differentiating teacher and principal effectiveness. Federal register text is in black font; recommendations are redlined:**

74 Fed.Reg. at 37809

(C)(2) *Differentiating teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance*: The extent to which the State, in collaboration with its participating LEAs, has a high-quality plan and ambitious yet achievable annual targets to ... (d) use this information when making decisions regarding—(i) Evaluating annually and developing teachers and principals, including by providing timely and constructive feedback and targeted mentoring, induction support, and professional development;

Sources:

- Goldrick, L. *New Teacher Support Pays Off: A Return on Investment for Educators and Kids* (2007), Santa Cruz, CA: New Teacher Center.
- Lankford, H., Loeb, S., and Wyckoff, J. "Teacher Sorting and the Plight of Urban Schools: A Descriptive Analysis" (Spring 2002), *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, Vol. 24, No. 1, 37-62.
- Peske, H.G. and Haycock, K., *Teaching Inequality: How Poor and Minority Students Are Shortchanged on Teacher Quality* (2006), Washington, DC: The Education Trust.
- Villar, A. & Strong, M. "Is Mentoring Worth the Money? A Benefit-Cost Analysis and Five-year Rate of Return of a Comprehensive Mentoring Program for Beginning Teachers" (Summer 2007), *ERS Spectrum*, Vol. 25, No. 3.

### **2. Ensuring equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals**

In NTC's recently submitted comments, we stated the following:

In order for school leaders to attract and retain quality teachers, research shows the need for school leaders to make decisions based on data that incorporate the perspective of classroom teachers. Teacher survey data can provide insight into the school culture, how decisions are made, and the use of instructional and planning time for teachers.

RttT should encourage states to show how they are using data from teachers, along with student achievement and other relevant data, to develop policies for these schools, strengthen school leadership, and ensure that they are settings where the most effective teachers want to work and can succeed.

The root causes of inequitable teacher distribution are multi-faceted. The suggested strategies articulated in the selection criteria focus too narrowly on recruitment, compensation and human resources. Specifically, research suggests teacher working conditions is a primary factor that impacts teacher retention and distribution.

**NTC offers recommended language change for the selection criteria related to ensuring equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals. Federal register text is in black font; recommendations are redlined:**

74 Fed.Reg. at 37809

(C)(3) *Ensuring equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals*: The extent to which the State has a high-quality plan and ambitious yet achievable annual targets to increase the number and percentage of highly effective teachers and principals (as defined in this notice) in high-poverty schools (as defined in this notice), and to increase the number and percentage of effective teachers (as defined in this notice) teaching hard-to-staff subjects including mathematics, science, special education, English language proficiency, and other hard-to-staff subjects identified by the State or LEA. Plans may include, but are not limited to, the implementation of incentives and strategies in areas such as recruitment, compensation, teaching and learning conditions, professional~~career~~ development, and human resources practices and processes.

Sources:

- Hanushek, E. A. and Rivkin, S. G. "Pay, Working Conditions, and Teacher Quality" (Spring 2007), *The Future of Children*, Vol. 17, No. 1, pp. 69-86.
- Hirsch, E., Freitas, C., et. al. *Massachusetts Teaching, Learning and Leading Survey: Creating School Conditions Where Teachers Stay and Students Thrive* (2009), Santa Cruz, CA: New Teacher Center.
- Lankford, H., Loeb, S., and Wyckoff, J. *Teacher Sorting and the Plight of Urban Schools: A Descriptive Analysis*. Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis Spring, (2002): Vol. 24, No. 1, 37-62.
- Leithwood, K. *Teacher working conditions that matter: Evidence for change* (2006), Toronto, ON, Canada: Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario.
- Peske, H.G. and Haycock, K., *Teaching Inequality: How Poor and Minority Students Are Shortchanged on Teacher Quality* (2006), Washington, DC: The Education Trust.

### **3. Providing effective support to teachers and principals**

In NTC's recently submitted comments, we stated the following:

Student achievement data alone does not provide school leaders the information they need to produce continuous improvement within their schools.

It is important to not only identify effective teaching, but provide teachers guidance and support to become more effective.

The NTC's formative assessment systems (FAS) can support districts interested in increasing teacher effectiveness. Beginning teacher FAS, mentor teacher FAS, teacher evaluation FAS, and school leader FAS can help build a more complete picture of teacher effectiveness than

student assessment data alone. Through the use of these tools, high-quality induction programs and job-embedded professional development rapidly advance teacher practice.

**NTC offers recommended language change for the selection criteria related to providing effective support to teachers and principals. Federal register text is in black font; recommendations are redlined:**

74 Fed.Reg. at 37809

(C)(5) *Providing effective support to teachers and principals:* The extent to which the State, in collaboration with its participating LEAs, has a high quality plan to use rapid-time (as defined in this notice) student data and feedback on teaching practice to inform and guide the support provided to teachers and principals (e.g., induction, professional development, time for common planning and collaboration) in order to improve the overall effectiveness of instruction; and to continuously measure and improve both the effectiveness and efficiency of those supports.

#### **4. Improving Collection and Use of Data**

In NTC's recently submitted comments, we stated the following:

NTC knows the value of gathering data directly and anonymously from practitioners to inform local and state decision-making processes and improve school leadership. NTC also knows that such data, when used with other data sets that report teacher turnover rates, student achievement, and graduation rates, is critical in understanding influences on teacher effectiveness. Yet, there is no mention of requiring states to gather data directly from practitioners and place it in their longitudinal data system.

**Recommendation:**

**RTTT guidelines should specifically include teaching and learning conditions data gathered from practitioners to help schools, districts and states better understand supports and barriers to teacher effectiveness and to incorporate this information into their longitudinal P-20 data systems.**

NTC's extensive research has shown that data obtained from anonymous teacher and principal teaching and learning conditions surveys provides tremendous assistance to leaders in schools, districts and states to assist in developing improvement plans and strategies. The data from these surveys has consistently demonstrated the connection between quality school leadership and improved student achievement, teacher recruitment and retention, and can assist struggling schools and districts with to develop reform plans for improved student performance. Such data, when collected appropriately, helps schools and districts build strong supportive systems over time.

**NTC offers recommended language change for the plan criteria related to accessing and using state data. Federal register text is in black font; recommendations are redlined:**

74 Fed.Reg. at 37809

(B)(3) *Using data to improve instruction:* The extent to which the State, in collaboration with its participating LEAs, has a high-quality plan to—(i) Increase the use of instructional improvement systems (as defined in this notice) that provide teachers, principals, and administrators with the information they need to inform and improve their instructional practices, decision-making, and overall effectiveness; and (ii) Collect school- and district-level data including, but not necessarily limited to, that gathered directly from practitioners on teaching and learning conditions and that

related to teacher recruitment and retention, professional development, student achievement, and school leadership; and (iii) Make these data, together with statewide longitudinal data system data, available and accessible to researchers so that they have detailed information with which to evaluate the effectiveness of instructional materials, strategies, and approaches for educating different types of students (e.g., students with disabilities, limited English proficient students, students whose achievement is well below or above grade level), in a manner that complies with the applicable requirements of FERPA.

Sources:

- Hanushek, E. A. and Rivkin, S. G. “Pay, Working Conditions, and Teacher Quality” (Spring 2007), *The Future of Children*, Vol. 17, No. 1, pp. 69-86.
- Hirsch, E., Freitas, C., et. al.. *Massachusetts Teaching, Learning and Leading Survey: Creating School Conditions Where Teachers Stay and Students Thrive* (2009), Santa Cruz, CA: New Teacher Center.
- Leithwood, K. *Teacher working conditions that matter: Evidence for change* (2006), Toronto, ON, Canada: Elementary Teachers’ Federation of Ontario.